

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
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San Diego, California***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - March 10, 2005

Carol C. Lam, United States Attorney for the Southern District of California, today announced that Sergio Martinez pled guilty in federal court in San Diego to the felony charge of setting timber afire. Martinez, a West Covina resident, appeared today before United States District Court Judge Roger T. Benitez and entered his guilty plea to count one of a two count indictment. In connection with his plea, Martinez admitted that on October 25, 2003, in the Cleveland National Forest, he willfully set brush and timber he had gathered on fire. He further acknowledged that he did not have authority to set the fire and that the fire (later known as the "Cedar fire") spread throughout the forest and other areas of San Diego County. The plea agreement provides that at the time of sentencing, the Government will dismiss the second count of the indictment, which charged the defendant with lying to a federal officer.

United States Attorney Lam said, "By pleading guilty, Mr. Martinez has acknowledged responsibility

for his role in setting this fire. No criminal prosecution, however, can lessen the enormous losses caused by this great tragedy.”

Martinez is scheduled to appear before the Honorable Roger T. Benitez, United States District Court Judge, for a sentencing hearing at the United States Courthouse in San Diego, on August 5, 2005 at 9:00 a.m.

DEFENDANT

Sergio Espinoza Martinez

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1855-Setting Timber Afire (Count 1)

Penalties: Maximum five years in prison, \$250,000 fine, \$100.00 penalty assessment, and three years Supervised Release

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001-False Statement (Count 2)

Penalties: Maximum five years in prison, \$250,000 fine, \$100.00 penalty assessment, and three years Supervised Release

AGENCY

United States Forest Service